

CHAPTER XIV

POLITICAL

WHITINGS 1835-

1836

During the next couple of years Disraeli's political activity was mainly with the pen. He had a mind of the complexion that will not allow a man to feel at ease in a fresh position till he has framed a theory to account for it ; and now that he had become a Tory it was necessary for him to justify his faith both to himself and to the world. The times and the Tory party alike called for guidance : in his own words, it was ' a perplexed, ill-informed, jaded and shallow generation.' The reaction which followed the high idealism and strenuous efforts of the French Revolutionary era had produced the Benthamite philosophy and the Ricardian political economy, and when Disraeli entered public life these systems had just emerged from their period of struggle as the peculiar possession of an unpopular sect, and attained to that position of dominating influence over the mind of England, and especially over the mind of the English middle class, which they were to retain for nearly fifty years. It was only in the eighth decade of the century, after Disraeli himself had overthrown the ascendancy of the middle class, and when for the greater part of the decade he was Prime Minister